

County Web site lists fines of politicians to make them pay

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Much like Santa Claus, the Macomb County Clerk's Office has a naughty list.

But instead of a lump of coal, the individuals on this list could go to court if they don't

pay the fines they incurred for either failing to report campaign contributions or filing them late.

County Clerk Carmella Sabaugh has published a list on the county Web site of 45 campaign committees and former candidates that, combined, owe more than \$35,000.

Of the 45 listed, only a handful are from northern communities in the county.

By reporting their contributions, a committee or candidate fulfills state election laws that require all money raised be accounted for along with the source of the contribution.

Attempts to inform these individuals of their fines has been made through written correspondence, Sabaugh said.

A letter was even sent to everyone on the list prior to its being posted on the Web, informing them the information would be publicized.

About five committees or candidates that would have been on the list paid about \$2,000 each in fines to avoid being named.

"A lot of times we hear from candidates that they didn't get the letter," Sabaugh said. "We were able to come up with a way for them to see they owe fees."

"It is also the public's right to know what is going on with campaign finance."

Prior to state law requiring all contributions be reported, anything less than \$20 didn't need to be accounted for.

But if a candidate or committee knows they won't raise or spend more than \$1,000, then they can fill out a waiver to avoid reporting their fundraising activities, Sabaugh said.

"It isn't to penalize anyone, it is just to bring it to their attention more," she said. "The responsibility for it is on the candidate."

"They really have to make sure they understand these things."

The fines listed as being owed range from just \$20 to \$3,000.

The biggest offender locally is the Citizens Association of

Ray Township, which owes \$1,000.

The group sought to unseat individuals within the Ray Township government and was dissolved in 1999, according to a former treasurer of the organization.

The official said she is now "battling" the clerk's office about the money owed.

Romeo resident Tadd Siglow, who made an unsuccessful bid for village president in 2003, has a much smaller debt of \$275 with the clerk's office.

Siglow said the fines were news to him.

"No, I didn't even know," said Siglow, adding that he would be paying them. "If I owe them, believe me, I will pay them."

"You can get into a lot of trouble for that."

The list can be viewed on the clerk's Web site at <http://www.macombcounty-mi.gov/clerksoffice/election-Dept.asp>.